**The Report Committee for Katherine Shamani Martin**
**Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

# The Case for Community Schools

**APPROVED BY**
**SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

**Supervisor:** _____
David Springer

**Co-Supervisor:** _____
Calvin Streeter

# The Case for Community Schools

**by**

**Katherine Shamani Martin**

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# Dedication

To my family, mentors, and students.

# Abstract

## The Case for Community Schools

Katherine Shamani Martin, MPAff; MSSW

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Supervisor: David Springer

Co-Supervisor: Calvin Streeter

In Texas, one in every four children lives in poverty. Poverty negatively impacts children in a myriad of ways, which ultimately can effect their achievement in school. With accountability standards rising, struggling schools are working to increase student achievement through various turnaround strategies to keep their doors open. Often times, turnaround strategies solely focus on administration, teachers, and curriculum. These strategies have had mixed results and fail to address one of the root causes of low student achievement, poverty.

The purpose of this report is to present an alternative turnaround strategy that addresses poverty's negative effect on students while simultaneously increasing student achievement. A community school is an alternate turnaround strategy that serves as a place-based institution within a community where students are both held to high academic standards and have access to whole-child focused services, programs, and opportunities to address out-of-school challenges. Community schools collaborate with outside partners to meet the needs of students, families, and the broader community. By

addressing out-of-school barriers that hamper student success by localizing and coordinating services on the campus, community schools across the United States have seen improved academic achievement, attendance rates, behavior, and engagement. This report identifies eight common attributes of successful community schools, explores the positive outcomes of community schools, and argues that Texas should allow struggling schools to adopt the community school model as a turnaround strategy to achieve student success.

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# OVERVIEW

One in every four children in Texas lives in poverty (Center for Public Policy Priorities [CPPP], 2016). A child's environment influences her opportunities and risks. Texas is home to both high and low-opportunity communities (CPPP, 2016). African American and Hispanic families are disproportionately represented in low-opportunity, high-poverty communities due to a long history of discriminatory practices (CPPP, 2016). Child poverty is linked with negative conditions such as poor housing, food insecurity, lack of health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under resourced schools (American Psychology Association [APA], 2016) Poor children are at greater risk of negative outcomes such as low academic achievement and behavioral, socioemotional, and physical health problems (APA, 2016). Children in poverty face many barriers to success, and many of these barriers are outside the school building. High-poverty schools serve more students who are likely to face out-of-school challenges that research shows is connected to academic readiness, test performance, and education attainment (CPPP, 2016). Poverty contributes to the achievement gap experienced by minority students (APA, 2016; CPPP, 2016). A child is much less likely to succeed when outside forces are acting against her. It is important to identify and address the in- and out-of-school challenges affecting a student to help her succeed. Schools are an efficient system for reaching out to children to address key challenges and provide needed assistance; however, a traditional public school in a high-poverty area may not be able to meet the needs of students due to lack of resources, services, and human capital.

Community schools are designed with the idea that issues outside the school must be addressed for student success. A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school, families, and community partners (Coalition for

Community Schools, 2017). Community schools focus on academics, health and social services, youth development, and community engagement that lead to student success and stronger families and communities (California School Board Association [CSBA], 2010; M. Blank, A. Melaville, & B. Shaw, 2003; M. Warren, 2005; Jacobson, 2016; J. Dryfoos, 2000; M. Horn, J. Freeland, & S. Butler, 2015). Community schools provide a comprehensive approach to address out of school challenges by increasing the amount of services and providers localized on a school campus (Blank et al., 2003). As a result, service providers can collaborate and share resources, staff, and information to meet the multifaceted needs of all students. By working together in one location, a community school can take a collaborative, holistic approach to address needs.

For a community school to be successful, the literature identifies eight common attributes as follows: creating an individualized design, fostering a strong academic focus, serving as a community hub, collaborating with strategic partners, providing services, hiring a community school coordinator, creating a shared vision, and focusing on data and student outcomes. Community schools respond to community needs. Table 1 depicts the eight attributes of community schools. No two community schools are identical; however, they tend to follow similar principles while simultaneously embracing diversity (M. Heers, C. Van Klaveren, W. Goot, H. Maassen van den Brink, 2016; Blank et al., 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 1999). All community schools are committed to improving academic achievement. A community school provides a rigorous core instructional program and extended learning opportunities for students (Blank et al., 2003; Harris & Wilkes 2013; Blank et al., 2006). A community school serves as a hub for the surrounding community by providing and organizing an array of services, opportunities, and support (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Jacobson, 2016; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013). The purpose of providing services is to better educational

outcomes; however, there is an understanding of the link between a school and its community. Thus, community schools provide support for the entire community. Collaboration is at the heart of community schools. Schools identify the needs of students, families, and community members and strategically secure assets and partners to fulfill those needs (Jacobson, 2016). Collaborative partnerships bring in additional services and staff to provide assistance and increase achievement. Community schools build social capital around the school by weaving together strategic partnerships (Jacobson, 2016; IEL, 2017). The community school coordinator is responsible for identifying, mobilizing, and integrating partners and assets within the community school to meet the multifaceted needs of the school (Blank et al., 2003; Jacobson, 2016; Harris et al., 2013; PotaPchuk, 2013). Services are localized for accessibility (CSBA, 2010). Through partnerships, community schools provide a set of mutually reinforced, integrated services and programs. Support can include mental health services, family stability programs, and afterschool programming. A community school needs a shared vision and goals agreed upon by the students, families, school, and partners (CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Harris et al., 2013; PotaPchuk, 2013). The shared vision is dedicated to meeting the needs of all students. To meet these goals, partners regularly share and track student data over time to evaluate outcomes for the students being served. Shared data is used to make whole-school and individual student decisions. In 2017, the Institute for Educational Leadership released a report detailed the best practices for implementing a community school. Each standard was identified in the eight common attributes of community schools detailed in this report.

Community schools produce positive results in schools. Research shows positive gains in six major areas. Community schools can increase academic achievement, improve student attendance, increase positive behavior, increase parent engagement,

increase access to services, and better the school and community environment. Community schools improve student achievement (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; Communities in Schools [CIS], 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Improvements in student achievement can vary across schools due to individualized design; however, many studies report strong academic gains in reading and math scores in schools across the country (Lee, 2005; Blank et al., 2003; Moore & Emig, 2014). Additionally, evidence shows community schools have led to higher overall achievement, higher overall GPA, smaller achievement gaps, and higher graduation rates (Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; Grossman et al., 2009). Community schools have a positive effect on student attendance (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; IEL, 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Studies report community schools have experienced increases in average daily attendance, fewer school dropouts, and higher college attendance rates (Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003). Community schools better positive student behavioral outcomes (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Dryfoos, 2000; CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Evidence shows improved behavioral outcomes such as reduced suspensions, reduced high-risk behaviors, and improved social behavior (Lee, 2005; CSBA, Blank et al., 2003; CIS, 2007). Evidence supports that community schools increase family engagement and parent involvement (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Dryfoos, CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Additionally, community schools increase access to services for students, families, and community members by housing multiple services and programs (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Dryfoos, CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Lastly, studies report community schools have a positive impact on the school and

community as a whole (Lee, 2005; Blank et al., 2003; IEL, 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; Grossman et al., 2009).

Nearly three-fifths (59 percent) of Texas public school students are economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2017). These students are attending low-resourced schools that cannot address the out of school challenges they experience. These challenges can affect achievement. As a result, low-resourced schools are often low performing and can face rigid intervention strategies from the State. Under House Bill (HB) 1842, schools that have been labeled unacceptable for two years must develop a turnaround plan and submit it to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Within two years of creating the plan, a school must produce significant and sustainable gains in achievement as well as a "Met Standard" rating from the TEA. Currently, schools are only allowed to choose from a few different turnaround strategies. The current strategies for school turnaround plans have had mixed results and do not address one of the root causes of low achievement for students, poverty. With mixed results for current turnaround plans, HB 1842 can be amended to include the community schools model as a preferred strategy for low-performing schools that are struggling academically in addition to current strategies. The community school model would allow a struggling school to take a systemic, comprehensive approach to bettering academic outcomes for all students. The community school model offers a viable, productive strategy under the turnaround plan because community schools are designed with the understanding that outside challenges must be addressed to produce success.

In addition to allowing schools to adopt a community school turnaround strategy under HB 1842, the legislature may consider authorizing funding for the coordination of external resources, services, and community partners at the campus-level. By authorizing funding, struggling schools could start building a community school infrastructure. The

evidence supports the argument that community schools increase student achievement (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; Communities in Schools [CIS], 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Texas can be made stronger by giving schools a chance and supporting students, families, and communities by providing options and funding for community school models in struggling schools. When the root cause of low achievement is addressed, students and communities will flourish.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2017) reports 59 percent of Texas public school students are economically disadvantaged. These children are subjected to the negative effects of poverty. Child poverty is linked with negative conditions such as substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition, food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under resourced schools (American Psychology Association [APA], 2016). These out of school challenges are connected to academic readiness, test performance and education attainment (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009; Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). In Texas, low-performing schools often serve a higher rate of students in poverty (TEA, 2017). These schools are unable to meet the outside challenges of students in poverty due to the school's lack of resources and human capital; therefore, it can be difficult for high-poverty, low-performing schools to foster student achievement.

To help a child succeed in the classroom, it is important to look at both the in- and out-of-school challenges affecting him or her. Once these challenges are determined, they should be addressed to help the child be successful. Schools are one of the most efficient systems for reaching out to students to address key challenges and provide needed services and programs; however, a traditional public school in a high-poverty area may not be able to meet the needs of students in poverty.

# Chapter 1: Community Schools: An Overview

## WHY CHILD POVERTY MATTERS

One in four Texas children live in poverty (Center for Public Policy Priorities [CPPP], 2016). The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) reports the environment a child is raised in can influence her opportunities and risks (CPPP, 2016). Texas is home to both high and low-opportunity communities. African American and Hispanic families are disproportionately represented in low-opportunity, high-poverty communities due to a long history of discriminatory practices (CPPP, 2016). Child poverty is linked with negative conditions such as substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition, food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under resourced schools (American Psychology Association [APA], 2016). Furthermore, poor children are at greater risk of negative outcomes such as poor academic achievement, school dropout, abuse and neglect, behavioral and socioemotional problems, physical health problems, and developmental delays (APA, 2016). African American and Hispanic children are at a greater risk of experiencing these negative conditions and outcomes than their White peers.

Research shows that students in poverty develop academic skills slower when compared to students in higher income families (Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, & Maczuga, 2009). This slow skill development can be attributed to many factors influencing a child. First, chronic stress associated with living in poverty has proven to adversely affect students' concentration and memory, which may negatively impact their ability to learn in the classroom (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Second, a student's home environment may not be conducive for developing and maintaining academic skills because a family might be experiencing high stress, limited financial resources, or too

busy to devout to learning (Aikens et al., 2008). Third, schools in high poverty communities are often heavily under resourced, which negatively affects a student's academic progress (Aikens et al., 2008). Under resourced schools suffer from high levels of teacher unemployment, teacher migration, less effective teachers, and overall low educational achievement amongst the student body (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2008).

Poverty contributes to the academic achievement gap experienced by African American and Hispanic students when compared to the achievement levels of their White peers (APA, 2016). When students struggle to achieve in school, chronic absenteeism and high drop out rates can occur. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the dropout rate for students in low-income families is greater than the rate for students from higher-income families (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Additionally, drop out rates are higher for Latino and African American students compared to their White peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

Stress and failure are not the only negative experiences faced by children in poverty. Evidence supports a link between poverty and negative psychological outcomes (APA, 2016). Children in poverty are more likely to have higher levels of emotional and behavioral difficulties such as anxiety, depression, attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder, and conduct disorders (Spencer, Kohn, & Woods, 2002; Goodman, 1999). Texas has one of the highest rates of uninsured children in the United States (CPPP, 2016). Many of these uninsured children are in areas of high poverty and could be experiencing unaddressed mental illnesses that hamper their ability to succeed. Students in poverty face many barriers to success, and many of these barriers are outside the school building. CPPP argues, "High-poverty schools serve more students who are likely to face out-of-school challenges that research shows is connected to academic readiness, test

performance and education attainment" (CPPP, 2016, p. 28). Students cannot be academically successful when outside forces area acting against them.

## WHAT ARE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS?

The Coalition for Community Schools at the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL) defines a community school as, "both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities" (Coalition for Community Schools, 2017). Since the 1970s, a growing trend in education delivery models has been to bring needed services and programs to the school building (W. Conwill, 2003).

### Place-Based Strategy

A community school is a "place-based" or "school-based" strategy used to meet the needs of students, families, and the community by providing onsite, accessible services and programs within the community (Jacobson, 2016; K. A. Moore & C. Emig, 2014; Conwill, 2003; W. Potapchuk, 2014). A place-based initiative seeks to provide an equitable approach to ensure a community becomes a place that enables all children and families to succeed and thrive (Center for the Study of Social Policy [CSSP], 2017). Place-based initiatives utilize and mobilize residents, civic leaders, public and private sectors, and local organizations to transform communities into places of opportunity (CSSP, 2017). Moreover, place-based initiatives seek to identify local partners, resources, and support to solve local challenges. Community schools bring in local partners to serve the localized needs of their students and families.

Community schools are "hubs of the community" (California School Board Association [CSBA], 2010; M. Blank, A. Melaville, & B. Shaw, 2003; M. Warren, 2005; Jacobson, 2016; J. Dryfoos, 2000; M. Horn, J. Freeland, & S. Butler, 2015) Educators, families, outside partners, and community members come together at community schools to collaboratively support student success (Blank et al., 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 2013). Community schools serve as sites for the delivery of a wide array of services to both students and their families through strong, strategic partnerships with community-based partners (Warren, 2005; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002).

**Whole Child Model**

The community school borrows from the Whole Child Model by changing the focus of education from strictly academic achievement to looking at the long-term development and success of a student (Association for Supervision Curriculum [ASCD], 2017). The Whole Child Model seeks to ensure that students are healthy, supported, safe, engaged, and challenged (ASCD, 2017). When a student's needs are met, long-term development and success for the student will follow. Community schools partner with health and social service agencies, family support groups, youth development organizations, institutions of higher education, community organizations, businesses, local government, school districts, and civic and faith-based groups to ensure every student is healthy, supported, safe, engaged, and challenged at school (Blank et al., 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 2013).

**Conclusion**

Community school collaborators share their expertise, information, and resources to transform a traditional public school into a community school that provides a comprehensive set of integrated strategies (Blank et al., 2003; CSBA, 2010). Community

schools' services and programs can include social services and support, educational opportunities, tutoring, mentoring, parent education, family counseling, healthcare, nutrition programs, food banks, and employee assistance (K. A. Moore & C. Emig, 2014; R. Jacobson, 2016). Programs and services in a community school are open to students, families, and the broader community at all times throughout the year (Dryfoos, 2000; Jacobson, 2016). Dryfoos (2000) states, "community schools are open to students, families, and the community before, during, and after school, seven days a week, all year long" (Dryfoos, 2000, p.1) A community school is a place-based institution where students are held to high academic standards while receiving necessary whole-child focused social services, medical attention, counseling, and extended learning opportunities (Ronald Lee, 2005). Community schools focus on academics, collaboration, and services lead to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities (Blank et al., 2003).

## COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

### Brief History of Community Schools in the United States

Since the 19th century, localizing services has been implemented at varying degrees. Jane Addams', the mother of social work and the settlement house movement, brought together recreational, health, and educational services to the working-class in Chicago (Blank et al., 2003). In the early 1900s, John Dewey's concept of the "school as a social center" encouraged community partners to bring opportunities and resources to schools (Blank et al., 2003). Dewey believed education was essential for social change, and schools were important institutions to fortify strong communities (K. A. Moore & C. Emig, 2014). In the 1930s, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation worked in Flint, Michigan to promote broad community education. The goal in Flint was "to make

schools the social, educational and recreational anchors of their communities and to involve adults as well as young people in lifelong learning" (Blank et al., 2003, p. 3).

In the 1970s, Congress passed the Community Schools Act and the Community Schools and Comprehensive Community Education Act to demonstrate the federal government's support for community schools (Blank et al., 2003). Since the 1980s, various entities have worked towards developing and improving the community school model to address barriers to learning as a result of poverty (Blank et al., 2003). In the 1990s, the Children's Aid Society collaborated with the New York City Public Schools to establish one of the most noteworthy community school systems in the United States (Moore et al., 2014; Dryfoos et al., 2002; Warren, 2005). Other notable community school models include Community School Initiative, Beacons Schools, Caring Communities, Children's Aid Society, Communities In Schools, Healthy Start, Schools of the 21st Century, and the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (Blank et al., 2003).

In 1998, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, a federal initiative, supported the community school movement through funding (Blank et al., 2003). Currently, several provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) lend themselves to many core principles of the community school model (Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2017). In the United States, there are over 5,000 community schools operating in districts across the country. Several cities and school districts across the country have adopted the community school mode as the preferred reform strategy. Chicago has over 200 schools, New York City has over 150 schools, Portland has 84 schools, Baltimore has 52, and Lincoln has 25 schools (Children's Aid Society, 2017).

**Purpose of Community Schools**

The community school model was designed to address out-of-school challenges faced by students, families, and their communities to better student outcomes. Access to needed resources and service are often poor in low-income communities (Lee, 2005; Warren, 2005). If services are available, they are often low quality or families are unable to take advantage of the services because of inconvenience, inexperience, or intimidation (Lee, 2005; M. Heers, C. Van Klaveren, W. Goot, H. Maassen van den Brink, 2016; Coley, Morris, & Hernandez, 2004; Warren, 2005). Additionally, services in low-income communities are often fragmented across the community (Lee, 2005). Families can find themselves needing multiple services that are part of independent programs in various locations that do not communicate or coordinate with one another (H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor, 1997; Lee, 2005). As a result, service delivery can be inefficient and ineffective for low-income families (Lee, 2005; J. Walker & D. Hackmann, 1999).

Community schools were designed with the basic understanding that issues outside the classroom must be addressed in order for a student to be successful. Warren (2005) suggests, "Children cannot learn well if they lack adequate housing, health care, nutrition, and safe and secure environments, or if their parents are experiencing stress because of their low wages and insecure employment" (Warren, 2005, p. 134). Additionally, Heers et al. (2016) argues, "The rationale underlying community schools is that disadvantages that have multiple causes need to be tackled by comprehensive approaches" (Heers, 2016, p. 1017).

Community schools seek to provide a comprehensive approach to decreasing challenges by increasing the amount of services localized on the school campus (Lee, 2005). In doing so, fragmentation between service providers are fixed, and service providers can share resources, staff, and information to meet the multifaceted needs of

students (Lee, 2005). Services can include "enrichment and extracurricular activities after hours, medical clinics, family support centers, child protective services, juvenile justice services, mental health agencies, vocational and job assistance, drug rehabilitation, welfare and food stamp services, housing assistance, and after-hours supervision by community members" (Lee, 2005, p. 3). By localizing services, service providers can work directly in schools together to support students, families, and the community (Lee, 2005; Warren, 2005). As a result, access to services increases, redundancy decreases, case management improves, and efficiency increases (Green et al., 2014). By working together in a localized location, a community school can take a collaborative holistic approach to address needs (Warren, 2005).

# Chapter 2: Common Attributes of Community Schools

For a community school to be successful, there are eight common attributes that are reflected in the literature. The eight common attributes are creating an individualized design, fostering a strong academic focus, serving as a community hub, collaborating with strategic partners, providing services, hiring a community school coordinator, creating a shared vision, and focusing on data and student outcomes.

| Attribute | Description |
|---|---|
| **Academic Focus** | A Community school is designed to increase academic achievement for all students. There is a strong commitment to providing and improving well-rounded academic offerings including a strong, rigorous core instructional program and extended learning opportunities. |
| **Individualized Design** | A Community school caters to the specific needs of the students, families, and the community. No two community school are identical; however, community schools tend to follow a common set of principles while embracing diversity and avoiding a "one-size fits all" approach. |
| **Community Hub** | A community school serves as a hub or a central access point for the surrounding community by providing and organizing an array of needed services, opportunities, and support |
| **Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration** | Through mapping, a community school identifies the needs of their students, families, and community members and strategically secures assets and partners to collaboratively fulfill those needs. |
| **Full-Service Schools** | Community schools connect students and families to services and programs to meet their basic physical, mental, and emotional health needs. These services can be called school-linked services, integrated services, school-based clinics, one-stop shopping, or wraparound services. |
| **Community School Coordinator** | The community school coordinator is responsible for identifying, cultivating, mobilizing, and integrating partners and assets within the community school model in accordance with the needs and goals of the school |
| **Shared Vision** | A community school needs a shared vision, goals, and strategy agreed upon by the students, families, community, and partners to be effective. The shared vision must is dedicated to meeting the needs of all students within the community. |
| **Student Outcomes and Evaluation** | Community school partners regularly share and track student data over time to plan and evaluate results and outcomes for the students being served. Data is essential to create student-centered learning in community schools |

Table 1: Common Attributes of Community Schools.

## ACADEMIC FOCUS

The end goal of a community school is academic achievement for all students. When creating a community school, there is a strong commitment to improving well-rounded academic offerings. A community school works to provide a rigorous core instructional program (Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013; Blank et al., 2006). The core instructional program must include strong qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for all (IEL, 2017; Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013). Within the curriculum, community schools seek to pursue project-based learning (IEL, 2017). Examples of academic offerings include challenging and culturally relevant curriculum, high-quality services provided to English Language Learners (ELL) and special education students, community-based learning, service learning, civic education, environmental education, and real world learning through career and technical education, internships, and apprenticeships with community partners (IEL, 2017).

Community schools seek to expand students' learning through providing extended learning opportunities (CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Partnership for Youth and Children, 2013; Grossman et al., 2009). Expanded learning opportunities include learning activities before and after school and during the summer months (IEL, 2017). These learning opportunities are based in a community school to provide easy access to students and families (Grossman et al., 2009). Extended learning opportunities provide students with an opportunity to develop both their academic and nonacademic competencies when the school day ends (Blank et al., 2003; Grossman et al., 2009). Expanded learning opportunities can include, "after-school and summer programs, early childhood programs, youth leadership, service learning, extended school calendar and/or use of the community as a resource for learning" (CSBA, 2010, p. 2).

### INDIVIDUALIZED DESIGN

Community schools arise due to a response to the specific needs of the surrounding community (Heers et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2003). Community schools cater to the specific needs of the students, families, and the community (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; H.S. Adelman & L. Taylor, 1997; Heers et al., 2016; S. Castrechini & London, 2012; W. PotaPchuk, 2013). No two community school are identical; however, community schools tend to follow a common set of principles while embracing diversity and avoiding a "one-size fits all" approach (Heers et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2003; Coalition for Community Schools, 1999). Community schools perform needs assessments and asset mappings to explore the assets of the community and address the challenges affecting both the school and community. Services and programs offered by the community school vary depending on the needs of the community, community partner support, resource availability, and the overall governance structure (Lee, 2005; Blank et al., 2003). Due to their individualized design, community schools can widely differ in the way they are organized, staffed, and funded (CSBA, 2010).

### COMMUNITY HUB

A community school acts as a hub for the surrounding community (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Jacobson, 2016; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Grossman et al., 2009). Jacobson (2016) argues that neighborhoods are institutions that are vital to the health and economic strength of a community. Public schools are one of the most vital components of a neighborhood (Jacobson, 2016). A neighborhood is a community for students and families living or participating within its geographic area. Students, families, and community members can conveniently access public schools because they are conveniently placed within the geographic area of a neighborhood (Jacobson, 2016). Community schools are positioned to have deep knowledge of the surrounding

community by regularly conducting needs assessments (IEL, 2017). As a result, community schools are in a unique position to explore the assets of the community and address the challenges affecting both the school and wider community (IEL, 2017).

In addition to providing a high-quality education, a community school serves as a hub or a central access point for the surrounding community by providing and organizing an array of needed services, opportunities, and support (Jacobson, 2016; Grossman et al., 2009). Although the main goal of providing services in a community school is to better the school environment and educational outcomes, there is an understanding of the link between a school and its neighborhood (Jacobson, 2016). As a result, community schools provide services, support, and opportunities for the entire community (Jacobson, 2016; Horn et al., 2015). Examples of support include health, dental, and vision care, mental health services, social and emotional supports, housing assistance, family stability programs, early care and education, mentoring and peer conflict resolution, and positive disciple practices (IEL, 2017). Some examples of opportunities provided by community schools include adult education and GED preparation, career preparation experiences, community events, community issues and challenges discussed at the school with the community, and school staff and partners participate in community asset mapping and community neighborhood walk-arounds (IEL, 2017).

Former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, "When families learn together and where schools truly become the heart and center of a neighborhood—a community anchor—there are tremendous dividends for children" (Harris et al., 2013, p. 2). Partnership for Children and Youth (2013) argues that schools are a key access point to more effectively reach clients to provide services. Students and families are more likely to use services and opportunities provided at a school because it is convenient, trust barriers with service providers are removed, and the stigmatization of accepting services

is decreased due to the effect of offering more universal and preventive services to the entire community (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Jacobson, 2016). Over time, community schools become a true focal point in the community (Lee, 2005).

### STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Strategic partnerships and collaboration are key elements of community schools (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Jacobson, 2016; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Grossman et al., 2009). Through mapping, community schools identify the needs of their students, families, and community members and strategically secure assets and partners to fulfill those needs (Jacobson, 2016; IEL, 2017). Often times, community schools do not need to rely on one partner institution to meet their community's needs (Jacobson, 2016). Community Schools can identify and partner with multiple community-based organizations, for-profit entities, faith-based institutions, higher learning institutions, and other entities; however, a community school can also choose one primary partner to lead the community school model for example, Community in Schools (S. Castrechini & R. London, 2012; Jacobson, 2016; CSBA, 2010). These partnerships bring in additional services, expertise, staff, and programs to provide needed assistance, broaden learning opportunities, and increase academic achievement (Blank et al., 2003; Jacobson, 2016). Community schools build social capital around the school by weaving together strategic linkages and partnerships (Warren, 2005; Blank et al., 2003).

In a community school, partners work as a team to design a collaborative infrastructure and the systems needed to support the collaborative efforts within the school system (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; IEL, 2017). Partners must collaborate with the school and its staff to provide and coordinate a set of mutually reinforced, integrated services and programs specifically designed to meet the needs of

students and families (CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Heers et al., 2016; Blank et al., 2003; E. Harris & S. Wilkes, 2013). There is a mutual respect amongst partners to promote effective collaboration and implementation (M. Blank & A. Berg 2006; IEL, 2017). Although partners have varying degrees of leadership within the community school, it is necessary for all partners to contribute in the formation and infrastructure of the community school (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013). The school and partners can collaborate on leadership, planning, governance, and oversight (CSBA, 2010; IEL, 2017). All partners share leadership and accountability (CSBA, 2010; IEL, 2017). Partnership collaboration can also include collaborative funding and staffing models (Grossman et al., 2009; Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013). When entities operating within a community school are able to effectively and efficiently collaborate, a community school can become a vehicle for strategic, result-driven change for students, families, and the community.

Parents are involved in the collaboration efforts at community schools. Parents play a critical role in community schools (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Jacobson, 2016; Heers et al., 2016; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013). An important goal of community schools is to increase parent and family involvement to better outcomes for children (CSBA, 2010; Heers et al., 2016). Harris et al. (2013) argues, "Families serve as key partners to help address the complex conditions and varied environments where children learn and grow" (Harris, 2013, p. 5). Parents are included as planners and decision makers through participation on school-based leadership teams to ensure the community school work to target needed resources and develop approaches that exhibit the equity concerns of various cultural groups (Blank et al., 2003, IEL, 2017). Community schools stress the importance of "two-way, culturally

and linguistically relevant communication" between families and the school (IEL, 2017, p. 8).

In addition to including parents in decision-making, community schools can provide education opportunities to adults in an effort to help parents better support themselves and family (IEL, 2017). Mapp and Kuttner (2013) argue that community schools that follow the U.S. Department of Education's Dual Capacity Building Framework build the capacity of families and educators to promote family engagement. Community schools can engage families through the following means: parent-teacher home visits, academic parent-teacher teams, financial literacy, parent leadership, school-based family resource centers, school-based parent coordinator, parent summer camps, workshops and book clubs, and family celebrations (IEL, 2017). These parent engagement opportunities work towards bettering the outcomes for students attending the community schools.

### FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

Grossman et al. (2009) argues one of the goals of a community school is, "to provide seamless learning opportunities and support for youth as they traverse the school, community and home environments" (Grossman, 2009, p. 2). Community schools connect students and families to services and programs to meet their basic physical, mental, and emotional health needs (Blank et al., 2006; Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013). These services can be called, "school-linked services, integrated services, school-based clinics, one-stop shopping, or wraparound services" (Adelman & Taylor, 1997, p. 408); however, the crucial purpose is to provide easy access to services to address challenges that are barriers to academic achievement (CSBA, 2010). Often times, existing

resources in the community are reallocated or relocated to the community school to increase access (Partnership for Youth and Students, 2013).

Community school offerings are selected to meet the localized needs of the school and community. Through collaborative partnerships, community schools provide a set of mutually reinforced, integrated services and programs. Examples of support include health, dental, and vision care, mental health services, social and emotional supports, housing assistance, family stability programs, early care and education, adult education and GED preparation, job training, career preparation experiences, and community events (IEL, 2017; Jacobson, 2016). It is imperative that partners coordinate across services and fully integrate their services into the school system for efficiency and access (Partnership for Youth and Students, 2013). Warren (2005) argues community schools can provide the strongest direct support system for children and their families.

### COMMUNITY SCHOOL COORDINATOR

A full-time community school coordinator is an asset when implementing a community school (Blank et al., 2003; Jacobson, 2016; Harris et al., 2013; PotaPchuk, 2013). The school coordinator has a deep understanding of the school's needs. The Cincinnati Public Schools Community Learning Centers reported key qualifications of a community school coordinator. Qualifications include experience with school, families, and comminutes, ability to build relationships with diverse stakeholders, data collection and management skills, ability to compile and report data, experience creating and managing partnerships, and the ability to implement a new idea (Public Community Learning Centers, 2012). One of the primary responsibilities of the school coordinator is to identify the school and community's assets and needs by performing asset mappings and needs assessments (Jacobson, 2016, Blank et al., 2003).

The school coordinator is at the center of a community school and works on-site (Jacobson, 2016, Blank et al., 2003). He or she is a member of the community school leadership team and can serve as a representative on behalf of the school and principal in communications with partners (Blank et al., 2003; Jacobson, 2016). Ideally, the school coordinator is a full-time position that alleviates the burden from the principal and teaching staff to meet the diverse needs of students (IEL, 2017; Blank et al., 2003; Public Community Learning Centers, 2012). Funding for the community school coordinator can come from the district or partner organizations. Ultimately, the community school coordinator is responsible for identifying, cultivating, mobilizing, and integrating partners and assets within the community school model in accordance with the needs and goals of the school (IEL, 2017; Blank et al., 2003; Jacobson, 2016).

**SHARED VISION**

A community school needs a shared vision, goals, and strategy agreed upon by the students, families, community, and partners to be effective (CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Harris et al., 2013; PotaPchuk, 2013). The shared vision must be dedicated to meeting the needs of all students within the community (CSBA, 2010). The vision is grounded in the understanding that student achievement is impacted by positive and negative conditions experienced by the student and his or her family (CSBA, 2010). With this understanding, community school collaborators including educators, partners, and parents working together to create a vision that sets high, clear expectations for all (Blank et al., 2003; CSBA, 2010). By setting clear expectations, a community school can better identify assets and needed resources in the community to support academic achievement (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013). Additionally, creating a shared

vision creates a shared accountability framework to better understand and measure outcomes for all involved collaborators (PotaPchuk, 2013; Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013)

### STUDENT OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

Community school partners must regularly share and track student data over time to plan and evaluate results and outcomes for the students being served. (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Moore & C. Emig, 2014; IEL, 2017). Data is key in creating student-centered learning in community schools; however, the logistics of data access can be difficult with various district data restrictions and parental consent (IEL, 2017). Community school coordinators, educators, and partners share and use data to make decisions on both school-wide initiatives and individual student needs (IEL, 2017). Data-driven planning is informed through both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data includes attendance, behavioral incidents, student academic assessments, and student climate surveys (IEL, 2017). Qualitative data includes feedback from students, parents, educators, and service providers (IEL, 2017). Once a data-informed improvement plan and goals are agreed upon, community school coordinators, partners, and educators most share their data and continuously evaluate the results and outcomes of services, programs, and opportunities being provided.

The Partnership for Children and Youth (2013) argues that, "Partners equally share responsibility for collectively achieving results and reaching identified outcomes" (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013, p. 6). It is important for partners to have access to student data to help them better understand and serve students (Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013); therefore, community schools and partners must consistently communicate and share information about a student's progress. Effective and frequent

communication between partners ensures the alignment of mutually reinforced, integrated services and programs (Blank et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2013). Community schools use data-driven decision-making to improve implementation of services and programs (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013).

# Chapter 3: Outcomes of a Community School

Community schools produce positive results in schools. Research shows positive gains in six major areas. Evidence supports that community schools can increase academic achievement, improve student attendance, increase positive behavior, increase parent engagement, increase access to services, and better the school and community environment (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; Communities in Schools [CIS], 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Due to the individualized design of each community school, specific data related to the six major areas varies across community schools; however, these six positive outcomes have frequently been reported in community schools across the country in varying degrees.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Evidence supports that community schools can improve student achievement (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; Communities in Schools [CIS], 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Student achievement can vary across schools due to a school's individualized design; however, many studies report strong academic gains in reading and math scores in schools across the country. Lee (2005) argues that a majority of evaluative reports on community schools provides insight into academic gains in reading and math test scores (Lee, 2005; Blank et al., 2003; Moore & Emig, 2014). The University of Illinois at Chicago conducted a three-year study on Chicago's Community School Initiative. The study included 110 elementary and high school working with more than 45 organizations. In the study, Whalen (2007) reported that 44 percent of students

participating in the Community School Initiative (CSI) programs improved at least one-half grade in Math by the third quarter of the semester. Similarly, 44 percent of students participating in the Community School programs improved at least one-half grade in Reading by the third quarter of the semester (Whalen, 2007). In Tulsa, community schools have outperformed traditional schools on state exams in math by thirty-two points and reading by nineteen points (Grossman et al., 2009; Blank et al., 2012). In certain cases, academic gains were limited to students receiving services as opposed to the general student population. This could suggest that the intervention caused the improvement (Lee, 2005). Dryfoos (2000) performed an evaluation on forty-nine community schools. In Dryfoos's (2000) study, she found that in eight of the forty-nine cases, only students receiving services experienced improvements in reading and math test scores. These services included case management, intensive health services, or extended day sessions (Dryfoos, 2000). In Boston, Boston Excels reported a 215 percent improvement in reading scores and 72 percent improvement in math scores over the first three years at one of Boston's lowest-performing elementary schools (Lee, 2005). Overall, Dryfoos (2000) found that thirty-six of the forty-nine programs reported academic gains. Again, these gains typically included improvements in readings and math test scores over a two or three year period. Additionally, many programs reporting academic achievement were elementary schools (Dryfoos, 2000).

In addition to achievements in math and reading, studies report community schools have led to overall higher achievement, higher overall GPA, smaller achievement gaps, higher graduation rates, higher homework completion rates, and better grades (Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; Grossman et al., 2009). In an evaluation of 20 community schools, Blank et al. (2003) found all community schools reported academic gains. In Blank et al.'s (2013) survey of community schools across the country, they

found that Achievement Plus, Boston Excels, Bridges to Success, California Healthy Start, Children's Aid Society, Communities In Schools, Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program, LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program, Polk Bros, Full Service School Initiative, Project Success, Readiness to Learn, Schools of the 21st Century, Schools Uniting Neighborhoods, Texas Alliance Schools, and Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project reported improved grades in school courses and/or scores in proficiency testing (Blank et al., 2003). Additionally, Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program, New York City Beacons, and Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project reported greater classroom cooperation and completion of homework and assignments (Blank et al., 2003).

### ATTENDANCE

Evidence supports that community schools can have a positive effect on student attendance (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; IEL, 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Community schools have reported experiencing an increase in average daily attendance, a decline in school dropout rates, and an increase in college attendance (Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003). Dryfoos (2000) found that nineteen out of forty-nine programs reported improvements in school attendance. In Dryfoos's (2000) study, several community schools reported lower dropout rates, specifically amongst pregnant and parenting students (Dryfoos, 2000). In addition to student attendance, Dryfoos (2000) found that several community schools reported higher teacher attendance rates.

Durham and Connolly (2016) conducted a study on 51 community schools in the Baltimore City Public Schools. Durham et al. (2016) analyzed the attendance outcomes for schools that had been implementing the community school model for five or more

years, three years, and two or fewer years versus non-community schools. Durham et al. (2016) found that elementary and middle schools implementing the community school model had higher average daily attendances (ADA) than schools that were not implementing the community school model. Durham et al. (2016) compared chronic absenteeism between schools that had been implementing the community school model for five or more years, three years, and two or fewer years versus non-community schools. Durham et al. (2016) found that elementary students attending a school with a community school strategy for five or more years were 41 percent less likely to be chronically than their peers in non-community schools. Middle school students were 48 percent less likely to be chronically absent than their peers in non-community schools.

Blank et al. (2003) compiled 20 different studies on community schools. Boston Excels, Bridges to Success, Children's Aid Society, Communities in Schools, Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program, Hamilton County Families and Children First, Readiness to Learn, and Urban School Initiative School Age Child Project reported improved average daily attendance (Blank et al., 2003). Communities in Schools, and LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program reported increased promotions and on-time graduations. Communities in Schools and Hamilton County Families and Children First reported reduced dropout rates (Blank et al, 2003). In Hartford Community Schools, East Hartford High School reported a decrease in the dropout rate from 22 percent to less than 2 percent over six years with an increase in college attendance (Blank et al., 2003). In Ohio, a community school changed an 84 percent dropout rate at the tenth grade level into a 100 percent school graduation rate in three years (J. Grossman & Z. Vang, 2009; Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011).

## BEHAVIOR

Evidence supports that community schools can increase positive student behavioral outcomes (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Dryfoos, 2000; CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Better behavioral outcomes have included reduced suspensions, reduced high-risk behaviors, reduced levels of drug use, and improved social behavior (Lee, 2005; CSBA, Blank et al., 2003; CIS, 2007). In Dryfoos's (2000) evaluation, she found that eleven programs reported a reduction in suspensions, and eleven programs reported a reduction in rates of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, disruptive behavior in the classroom, or general improvements in behavior (Dryfoos, 2000). The University of Illinois at Chicago conducted a three-year study on Chicago's Community School Initiative. The study included 110 elementary schools and high schools working with more than 45 organizations. In the study, Whalen (2007) found that reporting disciplinary incidents were consistently lower at community schools compared to non-community schools. Whalen (2007) reported that many community schools were working with community partners to develop early interventions to keep disciplinary infractions low.

Blank et al. (2003) compiled twenty different studies on community schools. In Blank et al.'s (2003) report, Bridges to Success, Communities in Schools, Hamilton County Families and Children First, Readiness to Learn, Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project reported reduced behavioral or discipline problems and/or suspension and expulsions (Blank, 2003). California Healthy Start and New Jersey School Based Youth Serves Program reported a decrease in self-destructive behaviors i.e. sexual behavior, drug use. Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program, New York City Beacons, and Urban School Initiative School Age Childe Care Project reported greater classroom cooperation, completion of homework assignments, and adherence to

school rules, and positive attitudes (Blank et al., 2003). OMG Center for Collaborative Learning compiled an evaluative report on five community schools in Hartford Community Schools. OMG Center for Collaborative Learning (2011) reported some progress in positive changes to all students' behavior. In Carson, California, Carson High School reported suspensions were cut in half, from a rate of 10 percent in 1998 to 4.7 percent in 2000 (Blank et al., 2003).

### FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Evidence supports that community schools can increase family engagement (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Dryfoos, CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Research shows that community schools can increase parental involvement, family functioning, family well-being, parent leadership, parent time with children, family stability, parent and school communication, and parental responsibility (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Blank et al., 2003; Dryfoos, 2000; CIS, 2007; Grossman et al., 2009; Dryfoos (2000) found that 12 schools in her evaluation reported increased parental involvement. For example, a community school with an intensive family intervention program in Missouri saw parent volunteer hours increase from 43 to 2,008 in two years (Dryfoos, 2000). Additionally, demand for family intervention increased in this school.

The University of Illinois at Chicago conducted a three-year study on Chicago's Community School Initiative. The study included 110 elementary and high school working with more than 45 organizations. Two-thirds of the schools maintained or increased their parent engagement levels (Whalen, 2007). Parent involvement, as paid or volunteer program staff, increased from 13 percent to 15 percent (Whalen, 2007). In the 2005-2006 school year, 178 programs and services in Chicago's Community School

Initiative were targeted for adults. 30 percent of these programs targeted parenting skills and helping parents support their children's learning at home (Whalen, 2007).

Blank et al. (2003) compiled 20 different studies on community schools. In 11 of the 20 studies, schools measured and reported on specific impacts of community schools on families. Boston Excels, Hamilton County Families and Children First, New York City Beacons, and Schools Uniting Neighborhoods found that communication improved between families with schools and teachers (Blank et al., 2003). California Healthy Start, Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative, and Readiness to Learn reported improved stability and or other outcomes related to basic housing, found transportation, and employment needs (Blank et al., 2003). Hamilton County Families and Children First and New York City Beacons reported greater parent attendance at school meetings (Blank et al., 2003). California Healthy Start reported parents' increased knowledge of child development and decreased family violence (Blank et al., 2003). Boston Excels reported increased civic participation and improvement in adult literacy for their parents (Blank et al., 2003). Boston Excels, Hamilton County Families and Children First, Project Success, and Texas Alliance Schools reported increased parent participation in children's learning (Blank et al., 2003).

Durham and Connolly (2016) conducted a study on 51 community schools in the Baltimore City Public Schools. Durham et al. (2016) surveyed parents with students in community school and non-community schools. The surveys included statements about how well the school worked with parents and connected parents with the both school and community-based resources. Durham et al. (2016) found that parents with children in community schools had significantly more agreement with questions concerning their school connecting them to community-based resources, whether teachers cared about their child, and school staff working closely with them to meet their child's needs.

Dryfoos (2000) found that schools with a strong family focus saw improvements in family function. In San Francisco, 71 percent of the families at Parkway Heights Middle School reported spending more time with their children (Blank et al., 2003).

### ACCESS TO SERVICES

Research supports that community schools can increase access to services (Lee, 2005; Blank et al., 2003; IEL, 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; Grossman et al., 2009). Housing multiple programs and services in the same facility increases convenience for families (Grossman, et al., 2009). When convenience increases, families are more likely to use services. Health services are one of the primary services provided by community schools (Lee, 2005; Blank et al., 2003). Community schools have experienced increases in insured families, improved nutrition, lower hospitalization rates, and higher immunization rates (Dryfoos, 2000; Blank et al., 2006; Lee, 2005).

Blank et al. (2003) compiled 20 different studies on community schools. California Healthy Start, Communities In Schools, Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program, Hamilton County Families and Children First, Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program reported increased access to physical and mental health services and preventive care for students (Blank, et al., 2003). Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program, Hamilton County Families and Children First, and Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program reported improvements in personal or family situations, abuse, or neglect (Blank et al., 2003). Hamilton County Families and Children First and New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program reported services being well integrated into the daily operations of the school (Blank et al., 2003). Center for School Change Initiative, Hamilton County Families and Children First, Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative, Project Success, Readiness to Learn, Schools Uniting Neighborhoods,

and Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project reported increased community use of school buildings, more family awareness of community agencies, and greater community access to facilities previously unknown or unaffordable (Blank et al., 2003). In 2001, Francis Scott Key Elementary #103 reported 100 percent of kindergarten and fifth graders received their immunization shots prior to starting the school year (Blank et al., 2003). At Northeast Elementary School, community partners brought a WIC office to the school. During the first year, the number of low-income mothers using these services significantly increased (Blank et al., 2003).

### SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Evidence supports that community schools have a positive impact on the school and community as a whole (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2000; Blank et al., 2006; Green et al., 2014; CIS, 2007; Dryfoos, 2000). Within the school, teachers at community schools have reported higher satisfaction, positive attitudes, and stronger relationships with parents (Blank et al., 2006; CSBA, 2000; Green et al., 2014). Blank et al. (2003) compiled 20 studies on community school. Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program, Hamilton County Families and Children First, Project Success, Readiness to Learn, and Schools Uniting Neighborhoods reported principal and staff affirmation of on-site services as an important resource (Blank et al., 2003). Children's Aid Society and Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative reported more cheerful and orderly school environments and an increased perception of safety (Blank et al., 2003). On a community level, Blank et al. (2006) argues, "Community schools promote better use of school buildings, and their neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents (Blank et al., 2006, p. 40). Center for School Change Initiative and New York City Beacons reported strengthened community pride and

identity and engagement of citizens and students in school and community service (Blank et al, 2003). Blank et al.'s (2003) study found New York City Beacons and Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project reported improved security and safety in the surrounding area. Dryfoos (2000) found that six community schools reported lower violence rates and safer community streets. Community schools have proven to revitalize communities and build stronger connections between families, schools and the community (Dryfoos, 2000; Warren, 2005; Green et al., 2014).

## CASE STUDY: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has the largest community schools system in the United States. Established in 2002, CPS's Community Schools Imitative (CSI) has opened more than 200 community schools in partnership with fifty lead non-profit organizations (Chicago Public Schools [CPS], 2017). The CSI seeks to serve students, families, and community members in the five following categories: "academic supports for students and families, social and cultural enrichment aligned to the school day, health and wellness services and referrals for students and families, socioemotional health of students, and family and community engagement activities" (CPS, 2017). The CSI has four primary goals as follows: "Transform and maintain selected public schools to become the centers of their communities, with campuses open mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekends and into the summer; Connect children and families to a range of services that foster individual and economic well-being; Counteract the effects of a range of negative factors that contribute to students' lack of opportunities and underachievement; Engage parents and the community to improve academic achievement" (CPS, 2017).

In 2006, The University of Illinois at Chicago conducted an evaluation of the CSI schools. At the time, CSI included 110 elementary and high schools and was working with 45 lead nonprofit organizations (Whalen, 2007). The schools consisted of neighborhood elementary and high schools, magnet and specialty schools, and charter schools. CSI envisioned a strong collaboration between the school and a lead nonprofit organization. They wanted the lead nonprofit organization to play the multifaceted role of "lead partner agency" (Whalen, 2007). According to Whalen (2007), the lead partner agency (LPA) wears "many hats, including administrator of community school funds, manager of after school programs, and convener and facilitator of planning and oversight activities that include family, community, and school stakeholder" (Whalen, 2007, p. 4). During the 2005-2006 school year, the breakdown of LPAs was thirteen social service agencies, ten educational reform organizations, nine community development and advocacy organizations, five youth development organizations, two arts education organizations, and two health promotion organizations (Whalen, 2007). LPAs supported the community school in designing the community school program model and curriculum, staff assignments, and resource allocation (Whalen, 2007). CSI schools heavily involved LPAs and other partner organizations in the planning, oversight, and governance of the community school on various committees (Whalen, 2007). Additionally, parents were well represented on planning and leadership committees for the community school (Whalen, 2007).

Parent engagement was an important focus for CSI. Two-thirds of the CSI schools maintained or increased parent engagement levels (Whalen, 2007). Parent engagement, as paid or volunteer program staff, increased in most CSI schools (Whalen, 2007). In the 2005-2006 school year, 178 programs were targeted to parents at CSI schools (Whalen, 2007). In addition to parent services, CSI put a strong focus on its commitment to student

and family health. CSI focused on service delivery focused on five health-related programs including physical education, enhancing the psychosocial and physical environment, health education, nutrition services, and family and community involvement (Whalen, 2007).

Academically, students enrolled in CSI schools experienced gains in math and reading. Whalen (2007) reported that 44 percent of students participating in CSI programs improved at least one-half grade in math by the third quarter of the semester. Similarly, 44 percent of students participating in the Community School programs improved at least one-half grade in reading by the third quarter of the semester (Whalen, 2007). CSI put a great deal of focus on extended learning opportunities (ELO) or out of school time (OST) initiatives to further academic achievement. Whalen (2007) reports that CSI schools had increased the total number of hours of school-related activity i.e. after school programming offered to a large number of students on a weekly basis by roughly 50 percent in most participating schools. In addition, many CSI schools were offering summer programming for students. According to Whalen (2007), CSI was steadily closing the achievement gap between CSI schools and the CPS district as a whole.

In 2014, CSI schools were still focusing on extended school building hours, more quality academic and enrichment opportunities aligned with improved instruction, improved access to family and health services, and leveraging additional resources for schools (Chicago Public Schools [CPS], 2014). That year, CSI schools reported that participants in 100 percent of CSI schools showed higher attendance rate compared to similar non-participants (CPS, 2014). Participants in 100 percent of CSI schools showed higher reading score compared to similar non-participants (CPS, 2014). Participants in 88 percent of CSI schools showed higher math scores than similar non-participants (CPS,

2014). Participants in 100% of CSI schools had fewer suspension compared to similar non-participants (CPS, 2014). CSI schools had less high-level misconduct infractions in comparison to the district (CPS, 2014). Lastly, CSI schools served 5,000 adult family members in 2013 (CPS, 2014). It is evident that Chicago Public Schools Community School Initiative is working for students, families, and communities in Chicago.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Although there is a girth of research supporting the community school model across the country, there are limitations in the research and questions that need to be researched. As stated, community schools are individuality designed to meet the specific needs of students and families in the community. As a result, the design of community school varies not only across the country but also within states, cities, and school districts. Each community school serves a different community, holds unique values, and collaborates with diverse partners. In addition, the community school model is implemented in both traditional public and charter schools that can serve elementary, middle, or high school students. Thus, each community school is influenced by different variables that can make it difficult to analyze and find statistical significance that supports a significant connection between the community school model and student outcomes.

Currently, research and data analyzing the effectiveness of community schools are primarily focused on descriptive statistics, limited inferential statistics, and qualitative data. There is presently no robust research that statistically supports a positive relationship between the community school model and student outcomes. Moving forward, it will be important for researchers to further study the relationship between

student outcomes and the community school model to further legitimize its effectiveness in schools.

In addition to limited research, it is difficult to replicate practices at one community school and expect to achieve similar results at another due to the many unique variables experienced by both schools. As a result, it can be difficult for schools to achieve the same high positive outcomes experienced in Chicago or another thriving community school community. The Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) is working to develop a standards-driven, evidence-based community school model to help community schools across the country achieve success. IEL released the "Community School Standards" in 2017 to streamline the development and evaluation of community schools. At this time, there is no research on the effectiveness of the proposed standards in implementing and evaluation community schools.

# Chapter 4: Recommendations

## Best Practices for Implementing Community Schools

In 2017, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) released the "Community School Standards" report to engage and support community schools towards a standards-driven, evidence-based strategy to promote equity and educational excellence for all students and strengthen families and communities (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). IEL houses the Coalition for Community Schools, which serve as the champion research organization and alliance for community schools in the United States. The Community School Standards have three objectives: "to help new community schools more effectively develop and implement their community school plans; to assist existing community schools to strengthen the quality of their practice and document outcomes; and to provide a consistent language and framework for advocacy, technical assistance, research, funding, and policy reports" (IEL, 2017, p. 2). The standards were developed using the literature on community schools and highlight the eight common attributes depicted in Table 1.

### Community School Structure and Function

Part one of the standards focuses on the structure and function of a community school. This is accomplished through collaborative leadership, planning, coordinating infrastructure, student-centered data, continuous improvement, and sustainability.

#### *Collaborative Leadership*

IEL identified collaborative leadership as a vital standard for community schools. Collaborative leadership is defined as "interdisciplinary, cross-sector community partners share responsibility and accountability for student and school success" (IEL, 2017, p. 4).

Sub-standards under collaborative leadership include creating a "representative site-based leadership team" that includes students, families, community partners, and school staff (IEL, 2017, p. 6). As well as the designation of a community school coordinator that works closely with the schools administration and partner organizations (IEL, 2017). These standards are reflected in the strategic partnerships and collaboration, shared vision, school coordinator, community hub, and student outcomes and evaluation common attributes of community schools.

### *Planning*

The second group of standards focuses on planning. According to IEL (2017), planning "incorporates the assets and needs of school, family, and community in the school improvement plan" (IEL, 2017, p. 6). Under planning, IEL lists standards that include a commitment to a shared vision and mission of student success, a focus on disaggregated student data, and meeting individualized school needs through needs and assets assessments (IEL, 2017). Second, IEL (2017) highlights the importance of a "School Improvement Plan," which is a structural document that outlines roles, goals, and indicators for the community school. These planning standards are reflected in the individualized design, student outcome and evaluation, and community hub attributes.

### *Infrastructure*

The third section of standards is coordinating infrastructure. IEL (2017) defines coordinating infrastructure as "facilitates coordination of school and community resources" (IEL, 2017, p. 9). These standards cover the importance of the community school coordinator, collaboration, data sharing, and service support. They are reflected in the strategic partnership and collaboration, service based/full-service school, community school coordinator, and student outcome and evaluation attributes.

### *Student-Centered Data and Continuous Improvement*

The fourth section of standards focuses on student-centered data. Student-centered data is defined as "guiding opportunities and support to individual students" (IEL, 2017, p.10). These standards focus on data sharing and making data-informed decisions for students. Section five focuses on continuous improvement standards. IEL (2017) defines continuous improvement standards as "deepening the impact of the community school" (IEL, 2017, p. 11). Again, the focus of these standards is on data sharing and data-informed decision-making. These standards are reflected in the strategic partnership and collaboration and the student outcome and evaluation common attributes.

### *Sustainability*

Section six includes standards relating to sustainability. IEL (2017) promotes sustainability to "ensure ongoing operations of the community school" (IEL, 2017, p.11). These standards are reflected in the academic focus, individualized design, strategic partnerships and collaboration, community school coordinator, shared vision, and student outcomes and evaluation attributes.

## Common Opportunities in a Community School

Part two of the standards focuses on common opportunities in a community school. All the standards presented by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) are supported by the eight common attributes of community schools found in the literature and have been identified as best practices for implementing a successful community school.

### *Learning*

Section seven speaks to the importance of powerful learning. IEL (2017) defines powerful learning as "engaging students as independent learning" (IEL, 2017, p. 13).

Standards in section seven focus on designing a strong curriculum, giving students a voice, creating adult learning opportunities, providing extended learning opportunities for students, and engaging the community in learning (IEL, 2017). These standards are supported by the academic focus, community hub, strategic partnerships and collaboration, and service-based/full-service schools attributes.

***Integrated Support***

Section eight is integrated health and social supports. Integrated health and social supports is defined as, "addressing barriers to learning" (IEL, 2017, p. 14). Standards under section eight focus on awareness, accessibility, and localization of services. These standards are reflected in the individualized design, community hub, strategic partnerships and collaboration, service-based/full-service schools, and student outcome and evaluation attributes.

***Family Engagement***

Authentic family engagement is the ninth standard. Family engagement is defined as embracing families and mobilizing family assets (IEL, 2017). Section nine standards highlight building trust between parents the school, empowering parents to have a voice, inviting parents to take on leadership roles, and designing programming for adults (IEL, 2017). Family engagement is reflected in the community hub, service-based/full-service school, and strategic partnership and collaboration attributes.

***Community Engagement***

Authentic community engagement is the final section. Authentic community engagement is defined as gathering and galvanizing the community and neighborhood (IEL, 2017). Standards under authentic community engagement include exploring the community's needs and assets, opening the school to the community, and creating a

community hub. Section ten is reflected in the individualized design, community hub, strategic partnerships and collaboration, and service-based/full-service school attributes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING AND SUPPORTING MECHANISMS

The majority of community school resources and funds go directly to assist the community school in meeting their academic goals while also strengthening service access for students, families, and community members (Blank et al., 2010). Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, and Pearson (2010) selected forty-nine experienced community school initiatives from across the country to study their funding mechanisms. In Blank et al.'s (2010) study, 57 percent of funds were used to develop learning competencies, 19 percent of funds were used to provide health and mental health services, 12 percent of funds were used to staff sites, and 12 percent of funds were used to support families. Learning competencies included academic enrichment activities, after-school programming, early childhood education, service learning and civic engagement, life skills, and sports and recreation (Blank et al., 2010). Almost 90 percent of funding was used to support student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities

### Funding Streams

Community school funding comes from diverse funding streams. Blank et al. (2010) found that diversified funding in community schools leveraged dollars from the school district three to one. Of the forty-nine community schools studied, the funding streams are broken down as follows: 26 percent district funding, 20 percent federal funding, 14 percent state funding, 13 percent private foundation, 12 percent city funding, 6 percent in-kind support, 4 percent community based organizations support, 3 percent county funding, 2.5 percent private business funding, and less than 1 percent from individual donations (Blank et al., 2010). The Illinois Federation for Community Schools

estimates between a four and seven dollar return on each dollar invested in a community school through increases in access to existing services and resources provided by partners (Blank et al., 2010). Former Education Secretary Arne Duncan said, "For every dollar spent [on community schools], we were getting back five, six, seven dollars from the business community, from non-profits, from the social service agencies, from the state [and] the federal government" (Blank et al., 2010, p. iv).

The cost of running a community school varies due to a school's individualized design (Blank et al., 2010). Regardless of how much a community school costs, it is important to diversify funding streams. By diversifying funding, community schools can offer a variety of services, programs, and opportunities for students, families, and community members. There is a range of federal and state funding that community schools can tap into to help fund their efforts. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) can provide snacks and meals during after school programming. Also, various grants can be used to finance community schools. The Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT) provides innovation grants to help fund community school initiatives in Texas (Texas American Federation of Teachers, 2017).

Community schools can tap into permanent funding streams such as Title I funds to fund community school strategies (Blank et al., 2010). Title I funds are the largest federal investment in education (Deich, Wegener, & Wright, 2002). Schools primarily use Title I funds to provide extra academic support and extended learning opportunities in math and reading for low-income students to meet state standards; however, Title I funds can be used to promote academic achievement through support services including community school strategies (Deich et al., 2002). 7 percent of Title I dollars must be used on school improvement (IEL, 2017). Although Title I funds typically represent a small percentage of a community school funding streams, they offer a reliable and flexible

funding stream (Deich et al., 2002). Ultimately community schools must diversify funding streams and align public and private dollars to successful implement a community school (IEL, 2017; Blank et al., 2010).

## STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In Texas, 59 percent of public school students are economically disadvantaged. Many of these students are attending low-resourced, high-poverty schools that cannot address the out of school challenges they experience. CPPP argues, "High-poverty schools serve more students who are likely to face out-of-school challenges that research shows is connected to academic readiness, test performance and education attainment" (CPPP, 2016, p. 28). Such outside challenges impact student achievement. As a result, low-resourced schools are often low-performing schools and can face rigid intervention strategies from the State of Texas.

### Texas House Bill (HB) 1842

In the 2015 session, the legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1842. This piece of legislation provided updated accountability mechanisms for schools and a comprehensive update to interventions for districts and campuses in Texas (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2015). Meaning, the TEA created accountability standards for low-performing schools and suggested intervention strategies to help struggling schools. HB 1842 states that after a school has been identified as unacceptable for two consecutive years, the campus must develop and submit a turnaround plan to the TEA to produce significant and sustainable gains in achievement as well as a "Met Standard" rating within two years to hold the campus accountable and raise student achievement (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2017). If campuses are unable to produce significant and sustainable gains in achievement and achieve a "Met Standard" rating within two years, the school can face

school closure or be placed under a board of managers over the district (TEA, 2017). Under HB 1842, schools are limited in their strategy options for designing a turnaround plan for their campus when their campus is struggling. The current strategies that campuses are using for school turnaround plans have had mixed results across Texas and fail to address one of the root causes of low achievement for students, poverty.

### *Amendment to Texas House Bill 1842*

With mixed results for current turnaround plans, HB 1842 could be amended to include the community schools model as a preferred strategy for low-performing schools that are struggling academically in addition to the other current strategies. The community school model would allow a struggling school to take a systemic, comprehensive approach to bettering academic outcomes for all students. A struggling school cannot sustain achievement when outside forces are adversely affecting a student's academic readiness, test performance and education attainment. Until outside challenges are addressed, students cannot be successful.

### Authorization of Community School Funding

The legislature may consider authorizing funding for the coordination of external resources, services, and community partners at the campus-level. By authorizing funding, struggling schools could start building the infrastructure for implementing a community school model. The evidence supports the argument that community schools increase student achievement (Lee, 2005; CSBA, 2010; Moore & Emig, 2014; Blank et al., 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2013; Dryfoos, 2000; Communities in Schools [CIS], 2007; Grossman et al., 2009). Texas can be made stronger through giving schools a chance and supporting students, families, and communities by providing

options and funding for community school models in struggling schools. When the root cause of low achievement is addressed, students and communities will flourish.

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